

June 20, 1975

VOTER REGISTRATION BY MAIL

HON. DON BONKER

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 20, 1975

Mr. BONKER. Mr. Speaker, a voter registration by mail bill will be enacted in this session of the 94th Congress. The two most well-known bills on this subject are H.R. 1686, sponsored by Mr. HAYS, and S. 1177, sponsored by Mr. McGEE. Both provide for voter registration forms to be mailed at least every 2 years to all postal addresses and residences in the United States, whether or not the addressees are already permanently registered in a State and are, therefore, eligible to vote in all Federal elections.

I believe that post card registration is an excellent idea and that it is long overdue. For this reason I introduced my own bill, H.R. 6079, in April based on my experience as an elections official in Washington State. Under my proposal, all eligible citizens could register to vote in elections by completing and mailing a post card to the proper authorities. Postage would be paid for by the Federal Government.

The main difference between my bill, H.R. 6079 on the one hand, and H.R. 1686 and S. 1177 on the other, is that my bill would not provide over 85 million already registered voters with a useless form. In place of this unnecessarily expensive mass mailing feature, I propose that post cards for registration be made widely available in such places as post offices, social security offices, and other public locations and for distribution by private individuals and organization. Of course, anyone who wishes to register may call a registration official and the form will be mailed.

In addition, H.R. 6079 would not limit the voter registration program to a mass mailing effort. States and units of general local government would be offered financial incentives for implementing expanded registration programs including, for example, expanded registration hours and locations, mobile registration facilities, and public information activities.

Two Washington State papers, the Spokesman-Review in Spokane, and the Columbian in Vancouver, have recently run articles on post card registration. I would like to commend these two informative articles to my colleagues' attention.

[From the Spokesman-Review, June 18, 1975]

WEATHER'S FINE, THINK I'LL VOTE

Convenience is a favorite American pastime. As a result, it has brought a confusion between healthy growth and artificial necessity.

There is an especially troublesome problem therefore when convenience is added to voting, one of an American's most cherished rights. The biggest question is how far do we go in making it easier to register to vote before it begins to become artificial convenience.

There is a renewed effort in Congress to create a nationwide system of voter registration by mail. A provision of the bill would authorize the mass mailing of a post card-size registration form to every household in the nation prior to every federal election.

The steam behind this drive comes because of low voter turnout. In the 1974 congressional election, for example, the turnout was below 40 per cent. The support for post card registration grew because though few register, most of those who do end up voting.

But there is something about registering to vote by post card that demeans the process as though it were not really significant what sort of mental process and, initiative you went through to vote just as long as you voted. Boost the statistics but don't contribute to meaningful participation.

When someone takes the initiative to register to vote, he is making a commitment to vote responsibly. Post card voting registration sounds more like a raffle entry or lottery ticket purchase.

There has been a problem with voter registration among low income groups and racial minorities not only in the past in the South but in many rural poverty areas and urban low income pockets. But that problem is not solved by postcards but by increasing registration efforts and locations.

An alternative bill introduced in the House by Washington's Rep. Don Bonker is a more reasonable approach. Bonker's bill would make grants to states and localities to beef up their own registration programs with mobile registration units and efforts to encourage registration on a state and local level.

The mechanical and structural problems of a national post card registration drive are obvious. Citizens will become confused and may register more than once or there may be confusion about numbers of eligible voters registering in a single household. A bureaucracy is likely to develop to handle the many unforeseen problems.

In addition, state and local registration officials would have to compile separate voter lists for local and federal elections. Vote fraud could easily go undetected posing a need for penalties and enforcement. Mailing dates will be bothersome particularly if the mails are slow.

Many Americans may not be registering because they do not like the alternatives before them. Change that and we might see increased participation.

Summary: There are just some times when convenience goes too far and post card voting registration nationally is one.

EASIER VOTING REGISTRATION

Confusion over proposals requiring states to adopt postcard voter registration procedures may scuttle the badly needed legislation.

As outlined in a Congressional Quarterly "Pro-Con" feature on today's Op-Ed page, many Americans eligible to vote don't. Inconvenient registration procedures are one deterrent.

Proponents of postcard registration are after the same result—expanded registration and increased participation by eligible voters at the polls. But the proposal offered by Sen. Gale McGee, D-Wyo., is a cumbersome, awkward approach which, if approved by Congress, may not get past the White House.

McGee's bill would require the federal government to mail every household in the country registration forms every two years. The basic problem with that approach is that it is too expensive, a factor that may bring a White House veto.

The McGee procedures also would only apply to federal elections. Voters wishing to participate in state and local elections would still have to register under current procedures. Some people invariably would end up being registered to vote in either the national or the state and local elections, a situation which could create mass confusion at the polls.

A proposal by Rep. Don Bonker, D-Wash., also calls for postcard registration. Like the McGee bill it eliminates the need for a deputy voter registrar. But it would not require registration forms to be mailed. Instead, they could be made available to the public at the county auditor's office or could be distributed by groups or organizations.

As the Congressional Quarterly report notes, registration laws in many states are restrictive. Not only do the laws vary from state to state, but their administration may vary from county to county as well.

With registration being as much a part of voting as stepping into the voting booth, it should be a uniform, simple and inexpensive process. Bonker's proposal appears to be the best way to get the job done.

LESSONS ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

HON. PAUL N. McCLOSKEY, JR.

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 20, 1975

Mr. McCLOSKEY. Mr. Speaker, a number of us were privileged to observe portions of the recent Law of the Sea Conference in Geneva. One of the most perceptive of those observers was our colleague, GILBERT GUDE of Maryland. Mr. GUDE's report is grounded in his prior experience as an advisor at the First International Conference on the Environment at Stockholm in 1972, his chairmanship of the World Environment and International Cooperation of Members of Congress for Peace through Law, and from 8 years as one of our foremost environmentalists in the House. I am pleased to offer his report for inclusion in the Record at this point.

LESSONS ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

(By Hon. GILBERT GUDE, Republican of Maryland)

Despite a myriad of complexities the recently adjourned spring session of the Law of the Sea Conference at Geneva has produced a Single Negotiating Text and substantial progress towards a comprehensive Law of the Sea Treaty. The failure to produce a final treaty document in this round, however, has already resulted in a renewed Congressional interest in hard-nosed unilateral legislation in an attempt to protect our maritime interests. However, the Congressional crew which listens to the Lorelei song of untold wealth and ignores the rest of the world, could well note some of the legal circumstances surrounding the Mayaguez incident before sailing into treacherous waters.

The seizure of the Mayaguez resulted in part from different interpretations of basic sea law concepts. The United States has recognized a three mile territorial limit; the Cambodians claim twelve (in this case twelve miles from an island, the precise status of which is also in doubt and not clearly set forth in present international law). A more

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lutionary Student Brigade—RSB, Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization—VVAW/WSO, and the Southern Conference Educational Fund. At this time, the Revolutionary Union appears to be the leading influence in the coalition.

Leaflets distributed by the Southwide Coalition at a demonstration in Birmingham, Ala., on May 27, the day before the Southern Co. shareholders meeting, called for militant support of the anti-coal import forces at the company meeting. In part the leaflet read:

The purchase of South African coal by the power companies not only supports the racist regime there; it also threatens U.S. miners with the loss of their jobs if they struggle for higher wages and better working conditions. The giant companies in this way try to pit the U.S. workers against workers of other countries. But in reality we are not enemies but allies with the same enemy—giant corporations, such as the power company. Unite to fight attacks on working people in South Africa and America.

The leaflet continued the attempt by the Maoists of the October League and Revolutionary Union to involve members of the United Mine Workers Union in the coal boycott as a prelude for more extensive indoctrination work later on Marxist-Leninist lines.

My colleagues may recall the African Liberation Support Committee's proposal adopted as the working program of the Southwide Coalition which I placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on March 21—E1324-E1325. The Maoists stated their goals included indoctrinating the American people about the nature of imperialism, and developing the class consciousness and fighting ability of the workers, oppressed peoples, and the American people in general.

The discussion papers at the founding conference stated that "rank-and-file miners groups, union officials, consumer groups, and other progressive forces—such as liberal churches, students, community organizations, et cetera" were to be approached for inclusion in the united front coalition.

Using proxies made available by the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, N.J., and the Sisters of St. Joseph, two orders in sympathy with the church project, a handful of demonstrators were able to gain entrance to the Southern Co. shareholders meeting.

In the meeting, the "stop the coal" group wisely behaved in an orderly manner and were able to make lengthy presentations in support of their resolutions. Coalition speakers included Rev. Dr. Howard Schomer of the United Church of Christ's United Church Board for World Ministries and a long-time supporter of Communist Party, U.S.A., fronts and causes, the most recent being the June 19 22d annual memorial for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, sponsored by the National Committee To Reopen the Rosenberg Case; Timothy Smith; Malcolm Suber of the Southwide Coalition; Mike Dobson or Dobbins, Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization; Ed Martin and June Rosten from the Georgia Power Project;

Lloyd Baker and Richard Seymour of the United Mine Workers; and Lewis Gilbert of New York.

Rev. Schomer, whose speeches at the Southern Co. meeting were extensively reported in a "Special to the Daily World" article on June 6 in the CPUSA press, likened the import of coal from South Africa to dealings with the Mafia to purchase heroin.

Tim Smith, in his presentation, cited without any obvious attempt at humor, the many instances of leftist agitation against the coal imports by "U.S. churches, numerous organizations in the black community—CAP and ALSC, and consumer groups—the socialist GPP—as reasons to end the import contracts.

A vote taken on the resolution offered by the board for World Ministries attracted 2,279,205 shareholder votes out of a total of some 98 million votes cast.

The concerned citizens and constituents who attended the meeting of their company and spoke out to expose the long-range plays of the revolutionary support groups should be commended for their actions.

THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

SPEECH OF

HON. ANDREW MAGUIRE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 1975

MR. MAGUIRE. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to join my distinguished colleague in this dialog today concerning Government surveillance of U.S. citizens.

One of the basic rights we cherish most in America is the right of privacy. With the advance of technology, that right has been increasingly threatened. The problem is not simply one of setting effective curbs on invasions of privacy, but even more fundamentally, it is one of limiting the uses to which essentially private information is put, and of recognizing the basic proprietary rights each individual has in information concerning himself.

A government called upon to manage an increasingly complex modern society and to satisfy ever-widening demands of the people for services has come to require more and more information, as well as more and more effective means to handle it. Only in the last few years has it become widely recognized that the new information technology gives government great opportunities to do ill, as well as good. The accidental discoveries of various forms of political surveillance in recent years has served to underscore heavily the need to protect the privacy and individual liberties of American citizens.

I found it astonishing as I am sure many of my colleagues did, to read in the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights' recent report "Federal Data Banks and Constitutional Rights," that in the 54 Government agencies sur-

veyed, a total of 858 Government files contained more than 1¼ billion records on individuals. More recent information suggests the magnitude of files and records is much greater.

One of the most important aspects of the need for Government information systems is the extent to which each is authorized by explicit congressional enactment. I find it highly troubling that this report revealed that 84 percent of the 544 data banks analyzed are unable to cite explicit statutory authority for their existence. Further, I find it troubling that 18 percent could cite no statutory authority whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, several of the distinguished committees of the House, one of which is the Government Information and Individual Rights Subcommittee of which I am a member, are committed to ferreting out the facts regarding extraneous information kept on U.S. citizens by their own Government, and outright abuses of the Government's information-gathering techniques and systems.

Recent hearings of this committee revealed that public concern over improper government preoccupation with the political activities and views of American citizens by agencies such as the Secret Service, the FBI, CIA, IRS, Department of the Army were all founded. Files accumulated under various cover names such as "Leprechaun," "Coin-tepro," "Chaos," or equally amorphous-sounding organizational names such as Special Services Staff or Defense Central Index, contained at one time a minimum of 2 million U.S. names.

Continuing agency efforts to terminate what the heads of these agencies have acknowledged are improper or illegal files are to be encouraged. However, with each passing day, more astonishing revelations are made concerning the extent to which these files were not only kept, but were exchanged among various Government agencies. Illegal Army surveillance files on U.S. citizens which were thought to have been destroyed in 1971 still exist; moreover, the Defense Department admits that prior to 1971, exchange of this information between agencies did occur. Congressional efforts to purge unauthorized information collected by unauthorized persons had been thwarted.

Public and congressional concern over an increasing trend within our Government to snoop into virtually every segment of the lives of our citizens is not new and congressional efforts to deal with various aspects of the problem continue.

The enactment of the Privacy Act of 1974 was a major step toward safeguarding an individual's privacy from snooping and abuse by Government agencies.

But our work is not finished. As the Bicentennial approaches and we recall the battle our forefathers waged to secure these rights, we must not relent in our effort to assure an individual's right to privacy—a right which is absolutely essential to our democratic and constitutional form of government.